



MOUNT MERRION FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
(BELFAST NORTHERN IRELAND).



Pulpit Ministry of Mount Merrion Free Presbyterian Church

Lord's Day Morning 16th December 2007.

Series - God's Covenant Heritage

No.1 "Purchased, Preserved and Provided"

Scripture Reading 1Peter Ch5:3

By. Rev. Paul Thompson.

In order to understand the bible correctly we must have a framework in which to work. The scripture itself supports the system of interpretation that is often referred to as Covenant Theology. Covenant Theology is simply a term used to describe how God has worked and continues to deal with man since his creation. God's word reveals God to be a covenant-making-keeping God. Covenant Theologians and churches who maintain the Covenant position, as is the position of the Free Presbyterian Church, hold to two covenants which form the foundation of God's dealings with man, (a) *The Covenant of Works* (b) *The Covenant of Grace*. In Gen Ch2:15-16 we have the initiation of the 'Covenant of Works', "*The Lord God commanded the man...*" Adam stood engaged in a covenant arrangement/agreement. A Covenant which included a promise and a penalty, if Adam obeyed God, the promise of the Covenant was that he would live forever, however, should Adam disobey there would be the imposition of the penalty for transgressing the covenant, eternal death! Adam sinned, as the federal [representative] head of the human race, bringing death and the curse of the covenant upon all men [Rom Ch5:12]. We cannot explain the fall of man. But we know this, that God foreseeing the fall of Adam from all eternity had already entered into a another covenant arrangement with Christ the Son, a covenant so designed to effect the redemption of Adam and those who would be His chosen ones [the Church]. The first time we see this covenant is in Gen Ch3. Adam should have been destroyed without any hesitation for his disobedience! Instead of destroying Adam, God graciously reveals to Adam and through Adam to mankind this Covenant of Grace designed for his redemption. In this 'Covenant of Grace' Christ was appointed by the Father as the redeemer, who would come and first render a perfect obedience by His life to the law that Adam had broken and secondly would die, thus satisfying the wrath of God that Adam had brought via his disobedience. Thus Christ by His life and death effected a salvation for His people.

Essentially the purpose of God in the Covenant of Grace was the redemption of a people who would be the Church! The Church of Christ is therefore the product of the Covenant of Grace. As we discover the various terms that the Holy Spirit employs to describe those who are the recipients of Sovereign, Covenant Grace, '*The Church*', '*The Flock of God*', '*God's people*', '*The redeemed*,' '*Peculiar treasure*' in terms of how they became such, [by way of the Covenant of Grace] they are to be seen as His '*Covenant flock*', '*Covenant people*', '*Covenant treasure*' etc. One such term that is used to describe the people of God [the Church] is '*God's Heritage*' [1 Peter Ch5:3]. The possessive form of the noun, "God's" is not part of the original text, however, it is clear that the intention of the Holy Spirit in employing such a term is to show the Covenant relationship of the Church to God. That we are God's heritage is emphasised throughout the scriptures, 1 Pet Ch5:3; Micah Ch7:14; "*the flock of thine heritage*" Joel Ch3:2; Psalm 16:6; Job Ch20:29. The word '*heritage*' referring to those whom God has chosen out of the multitudes of mankind to be His own peculiar treasure. This is not an intended study on Covenant Theology, but I trust that you will see how essential it is for me to preface this study by beginning with God's covenantal dealings with man. God's people being designated as a Covenant Heritage are demonstrated to be:

1) A Purchased Heritage.

The word '*Heritage*' can also mean '*inheritance*' they are '*His inheritance*' [Deut 32:9], [relates to an obtaining]. Turn Eph Ch1:14, here we have the word '*Inheritance*' as relating to the possession of all blessings that God has promised to us, purchased by Christ Heb Ch9:12, "*Obtained eternal redemption for us.*" We have not possessed all that that redemption entails, but God has given the Holy Spirit as the '*earnest*' - [guarantee] until the day when the full payment is deferred. Rom Ch8:23 explains that as God's heritage we are to "*wait for the redemption of the body...all things.*" The full transferral of all the blessings of redemption will take place with the "*redemption of the purchased possession.*" Who or what is the purchased redemption? It is the Church the Lord's Covenant Heritage, for whom He has died and purchased with His own blood! They have been purchased by the blood of the *incarnate God* [Acts Ch20:28] "*The Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood.*" 1 Pet Ch1:18-19, "*Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.*" 1Cor Ch6:20; Ch7:23, "*bought with a price.*" Rev Ch5:9. The blood of Christ has effected the purchase, how valuable the Church is to Christ, something that the Pastor, eldership, diaconate and church member must keep in mind!

This purchase is a Covenant purchase, because the blood that purchased us is said to be "*the blood of the everlasting Covenant*" [Heb 13:20]. Christ raised back to life by the blood of the covenant, as the representative

"The Covenant is an expression of God's will, not man's and man must listen to its terms, trust God that they are holy, just and good and order his life accordingly." J. Gresham Machen.

of His covenant people then they too are raised back to life (spiritual life). Turn also to Zech Ch9:11, “*By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit {the grave} wherein is no water.*” Adam as the representative of all men by his sin sent all men to the pit [spiritual death]! Christ as the representative [federal head] of all those represented in the Covenant of Grace has shed His blood in order to release those sent to the pit by Adam’s transgression! The Covenant Heritage of God is a purchased heritage. You cannot become part of this Heritage some other way! Heb Ch9:12 It was by “*His own blood*” [Covenant Blood] that Christ entered heaven obtaining eternal redemption for us. Ex Ch12:12-13; Lev Ch17:11 Men are made part of the Heritage of God “*through faith in His blood.*” [Rom Ch 3:25; Ch5:9].

2) A Preserved Heritage.

God’s Heritage are exceedingly precious to Him, He has bought them and will preserve and protect them. Their preservation and protection is demonstrated in at least two ways. Firstly by the:

i) The Immutability of The Covenant.

Because the Heritage of God [The Church] has been bought by the blood of the Covenant, that covenant is ratified and is beyond change, no adjustment can be made, if God has purchased something, then it will ever remain His possession! The Covenant relationship that God has established with His Heritage cannot be broken, “*My Covenant will I not break*” [Ps 89:34]. (a) When believers sin the Covenant stands unchangeable, ratified forever with Christ’s blood! The Lord will never cast off His Heritage, even though they deserve to be cast off. Paul tells the Ephesian Church that they are not to “*grieve the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*” [Eph Ch4:30]. Turn to Psalm 94:14, “*For the Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance.*” (b) When God’s people feel the Lord has left them during some dark period of their experience, their relationship remains. The expression “*cast off*” in Ps 94:14 is often rendered ‘*leave*’ or ‘*forsake*’ [Ps 16:10; Ps 37:33; Ps 78:60]. Yet the Lord says, “*I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.*” Compare [Gen 28:15; Joshua Ch1:9, Deut Ch31:6,8; Heb Ch13:5]. The Lord can never cast of one that is His own. We are no more or no less justified than those already in heaven, “*More happy but not more secure, the glorified spirits in heaven.*” Why do we have a problem with Arminianism? Here’s why, because it destroys the efficacy of the blood of Christ and destroys the nature of God! If we believe the blood of Christ has the power to redeem a man from the pit, but has not the power to hold that man, we rob the atonement and Christ of any saving virtue. If we teach that God can change in His love towards that which is His own possession we destroy God’s nature! John Ch10:28, “*I give unto them [my sheep] eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*” The ‘any man’ is the ‘strongman’ Satan [Matt Ch12:29]. The strength of the believers union to Christ isn’t found in our ability to maintain that relationship, rather it’s rooted in the unchangeable nature of the Covenant of Grace, sealed by Christ’s blood.

ii) The Intimacy of the Covenant.

The nature of this Covenant relationship that the Heritage of God enjoy is a personal union that is intensely intimate! Peter refers to the Church as being “*the flock of God*” yet Christ as the Chief Shepherd has a personal, intimate knowledge of all His sheep, [John Ch10:14,27], “*I know my sheep...I know them.*” “*they are mine.*” the word ‘*know*’ means ‘*to love.*’ Oh! how Christ loves His people...“*Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it!*” [Eph Ch5:25]. He makes it His business to be acquainted with His sheep, how ought we to be acquainted with Christ! That is a mark of the Heritage of God, they know Christ and show it! “*by their fruit ye shall know them.*” You could be known as a member of this Church, but unknown to Christ [Matt Ch7:23], “*I never knew you.*”

The more acquaintance with Christ the more our minds are filled with trust for Him. That is vital if we are to enjoy a victorious journey through life, for when the times of trial come, it will be this knowledge of Christ’s intimate presence that will preserve us. Turn Ps 23:4, “*Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...thou art with me (protecting me).*” The Psalmist could say He [Christ] is a “*very ‘present’ help in trouble*” [Psalm 46:1]. Application - it is Covenant Theology alone that will sustain a person in such circumstances. Unconverted you have every reason to fear, outside of the ‘*flock of God*’ you must continue on the uncertain path of life alone, and if grace prevent it not you must face eternal death alone! You do not possess the benefits of preservation and protection that result from such an intimate Covenant relationship,

“*Under the Covenant of Grace we are secured from departing from the living God by the sure declaration of the Covenant.*”
...Charles Spurgeon...

Isaiah Ch43:3-5, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee...since thou wast precious in my sight...and I have loved thee...fear not: for I am with thee.” [A covenanted presence].

3) A Provided Heritage.

The covenantal purpose of God for His Heritage does not merely begin and end with their salvation, 1 Peter Ch5:3 clearly shows that. God intends that His heritage be supplied, fed and furnished with spiritual food in order that they may be nourished. The amazing thing is, that God has appointed and charged men with that task, those described as ‘pastors’, ‘ministers!’ Jer Ch3v15, “I will give thee pastors after mine own heart which shall feed thee with knowledge and understanding.” [Acts Ch20:28], “feed the flock of God”; [Jer Ch23:4; Ezek Ch34:23, John 21:15-16, Eph 4v9-12]. That’s the divine order for the Church! A Covenant people redeemed by the blood of Christ, overseen by elders and pastors who themselves are charged by the Holy Ghost! You can gauge the high calling of the elder and the pastor, not a office to be sought for in a light fashion. Pray for the leadership as they discharge their offices with the knowledge that this is God’s heritage, therefore great care must be taken.

In giving the gifts of Pastors and teachers to the Church [Eph Ch4:11-12] Christ shows His recognition that the Church is in need of pastoring. When a Church is given a Pastor by Christ, by God, that Church is privileged, I do not say that because it is myself making this statement! But when God gives a pastor to a congregation that demonstrates that in that place there are those in that Church whom Christ loves, it is a sign of Christ’s love for His people, He only gives Pastors to His own Purchased Heritage to supply and nourish them!

Further Reading - Westminster Confession of Faith Ch 7 ‘*God’s Covenant With Man*’ Larger Catechism Questions 31-36

By. Paul Thompson.

“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.”

Hebrews 10:16